



# News Release

**For Immediate Release:** April 12, 2006

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## **Governor announces new workforce development initiative**

LITTLE ROCK – Gov. Mike Huckabee formally announced the Arkansas Mature Worker Initiative at a press conference April 12 at the Governor’s Reception Room at the Capitol.

A new workforce development program, the Arkansas Mature Worker Initiative highlights featured employers who have made a commitment to hire mature workers. Many of these companies have offices in Arkansas. A list can be found at [www.aarp.org/featuredemployers](http://www.aarp.org/featuredemployers).

“It’s encouraging to see these companies recognize the value of the countless mature workers we have in Arkansas,” said Gov. Mike Huckabee. “I hope more employers see these workers are known to have essential qualities needed for today’s jobs, including loyalty, dedication and responsibility.”

The labor force in Arkansas and across the country will experience a shortage of qualified workers as the Baby Boomers begin to retire. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2004 and 2012 up to 43 percent of the current workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years. Two following generations are 15 percent smaller. Also, 61 percent of entrants (age 16 to 25) to the workforce are not fully qualified.

AARP hopes to increase the awareness and appreciation of mature workers by developing relationships with the public workforce system, states, chambers of commerce, national and local training providers, trade associations, labor unions, community organizations, policy makers and business leaders.

After rolling out the program on the national level, AARP selected Arkansas as a pilot state. Gov. Huckabee selected the initiative as one of his top priorities for the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.

Several regional meetings will be held across the state to inform employers about the initiative. The first meeting will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 18 in Room 203 of the Business

and Industry Center at Pulaski Technical College at Little Rock. A panel of employers will discuss the initiative and how their companies have benefited from hiring mature workers.

Additional meetings will be held in the following locations:

**Hot Springs**

National Park Community College

8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

May 17, 2006

**Fort Smith**

Fort Smith Adult Education Center

8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

June 13, 2006

**Springdale**

12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Jones Family Center, Room 227

June 13, 2006

**Mountain Home**

July 2006

Date and location to be announced

**Monticello**

August 2006

Date and location to be announced

**El Dorado – Camden**

September 2006

Date and location to be announced

**East – Northeast Arkansas**

October 2006

Date and location to be announced